

MARKED-UP COPY

Serial No.: 09/956,912

Amendment Filed on:

05/05/03

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claims 23 and 28.

19. (Amended) A branch pipe joint for a plurality of refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters of a multi-unit type air conditioner, comprising:

a branch pipe joint body having a hollow closed shape;

a plurality of communication ports provided in said branch pipe joint body, said communication ports having the same inner diameter as each other;

a plurality of connecting pipes through which refrigerant can separately flow, each of said connecting pipes having one end portion firmly fixed to said communication port in a state of being fitted to said communication port and another end portion firmly fixed to one of the plurality of refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters of the multi-unit type air conditioner, said firmly fixing operation being performable at an installation site of the multi-unit type air conditioner in which another end portion is fitted to the one of the refrigerant pipes; and

a common communication port through which the refrigerant can flow in a confluent state, said common communication port being provided in said branch pipe joint body;

wherein said plurality of connecting pipes each has one end portion fitted to one of said communication ports and another end portion fitted to one of said refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters, each of the one end portions having the same outer

diameter, while at least some of the another end portions have inner diameters different from each other,

and wherein a part of said communication ports is directly firmly fixed to a part of said refrigerant pipes without using the connecting pipes.

24. (Amended) A method of connecting refrigerant pipes of a multi-unit type air conditioner, the method comprising the steps of:

preparing a branch pipe joint body having a hollow shape and a plurality of communication ports each having the same inner diameter;

selecting connecting pipes from a group of connecting pipes at an installation site of the multi-unit type air conditioner, each of the selected connecting pipes having one end portion having an outer diameter enabling the one end portion to be fitted to said communication ports and another end portion having an inner diameter enabling the another end portion to be fitted to one of the plurality of the refrigerant pipes having different outer diameters, said group of connecting pipes and said branch pipe joint body having been packed in one package; and

connecting said branch pipe joint body to said refrigerant pipes through the selected connecting pipes using firm fixing,

wherein the number of said connecting pipes in said group of connecting pipes is larger than the number of said communication ports, and is set such that a total number of the connecting pipes having a minimum inner diameter and a maximum inner diameter is smaller than a number of the connecting pipes having an inner diameters other than the minimum and maximum inner diameters,

and wherein some of said communication ports are directly firmly fixed to some of said refrigerant pipes without using the connecting pipes.